

# Attacker of Quran-burning protester is spared jail

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Moussa Kadri told police he was protecting his religion

A Muslim man who attacked someone burning a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London has been spared jail.

Moussa Kadri, 59, saw Hamit Coskun setting alight the text and shouted: "I'm going to kill you" before slashing at him with a knife.

He later told police he was protecting his religion, Southwark Crown Court heard.

Judge Adam Hiddleston handed Kadri a 20-week prison sentence, suspended for 18 months.

## 'I'm coming back'

The incidents happened on 13 February in Rutland Gardens, Knightsbridge, when Coskun, 51, shouted "Islam is religion of terrorism" and "Quran is burning".

Coskun, who is half Kurdish and half Armenian, travelled from his home in the Midlands and set fire to the Koran at about 14:00 GMT, prosecutors previously said.

Kadri approached and asked Coskun why he was burning it.

Coskun could be heard in footage making a reference to "terrorists", and Kadri swore, called him "an idiot" and said "one sec, I'm coming back".

Kadri later returned holding a knife and slashed at Coskun, the court heard.

The judge said that the way Kadri lost his temper was "disgraceful" and that the "use of blades is a curse on our community".



Hamit Coskun was convicted at Westminster Magistrates Court in June

Kadri said to Coskun: "Burning the Quran? It's my religion, you don't burn the Quran."

He later told police: "I protect my religion."

Greg Unwin, defending, said: "This was a response to a very unusual situation that Mr Kadri has demonstrated regret and remorse for.

"His reaction was in the heat of the moment to what he perceived was a deeply offensive act on a holy book."

## 'Highly provocative'

Coskun was **convicted at Westminster Magistrates' Court** in June of a religiously aggravated public order offence.

An appeal was lodged with the Crown Court.

Coskun had argued that his criticism was of Islam in general rather than its followers, but District Judge John McGarva said he could not accept this, finding that Coskun's actions were "highly provocative" and that he was "motivated at least in part by a hatred of Muslims".

His case prompted campaigners and some politicians to say it was an attempt to bring back blasphemy law, but the government has said there are no blasphemy laws in England nor are there any plans to introduce any.



CCTV captured Moussa Kadri (second left), attacking a man burning a copy of the Koran outside the Turkish consulate

Kadri, who pleaded guilty to assault and having a bladed article in a public place, is also required to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work and 10 days of rehabilitation.

Lord Young of Acton, general secretary of the Free Speech Union, said after the sentencing that it "sends a green light to any Muslim who wants to enforce an Islamic blasphemy by taking the law into their own hands.

"The court is effectively saying that if you attack a blasphemer with a knife, he will be convicted of causing you harassment, alarm or distress and you won't have to spend a day behind bars."

National Secular Society chief executive Stephen Evans said that "free expression should never be met with violence".

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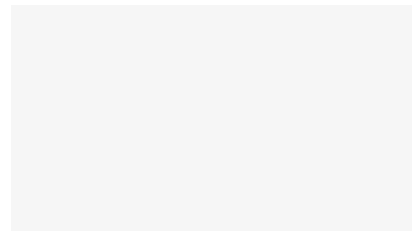
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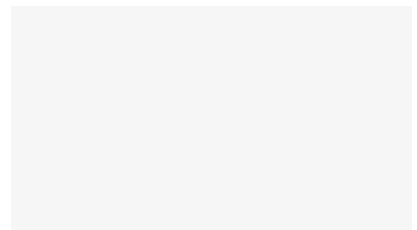


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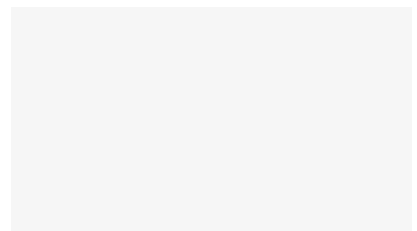


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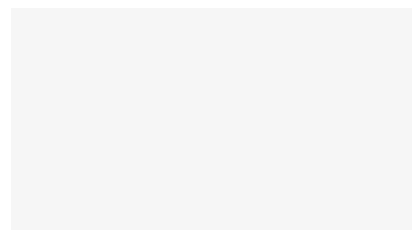


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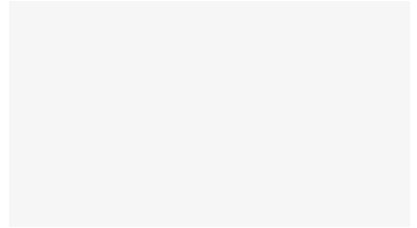


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